

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 PM-07 NSC-10 SS-15 RSC-01 L-03 AID-20

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R 292051Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4951

INFO SECDEF WASHDC

JCS WASHDC

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY PANAMA

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

USCINCSO

S E C R E T SAN JOSE 3072

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MILI, PQ, CS

SUBJECT: RELOCATION OF SOUTHCOM

REF: STATE 164406

1. SUMMARY. RELOCATION OF SOUTHCOM TO CONUS WOULD IN BALANCE BE VIEWED FAVORABLY BY MOST OF COSTA RICAN SOCIETY. ALTHOUGH SOME SPECIFIC ELEMENTS OF THE GOCR MAY REGRET THE INCONVENIENCE RESULTING FROM LOSS OF CLOSELY LOCATED FACILITIES FOR SAR, DISASTER RELIEF AND PROPERTY DISPOSAL SUPPLIES, WE SEE IN BALANCE NO ADVERSE DIPLOMATIC, MILITARY OR POLITICAL IMPACT. WITH REFERENCE TO THE CANAL ISSUE, MOST COSTA RICANS UNDERSTAND THE NEED AND EVEN DESIRABILITY OF US FORCES FOR CANAL

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DEFENSE; HOWEVER, BEING BASICALLY

SYMPATHETIC TO PANAMA'S POSITION THEY WOULD ALMOST SURELY APPLAUD A SHIFT OF SOUTHCOM AND NON-CANAL DEFENSE FUNCTIONS OUT OF PANAMA AS A FAVORABLE DEVELOPMENT CONDUCIVE TO RESOLUTION OF THE CANAL ISSUE. END SUMMARY.

2. OF THE NON-CANAL DEFENSE RESPONSIBILITIES OF USCINCSO LISTED IN PARA 3 OF REFTEL, ONLY DISASTER RELIEF (ITEM 4) AND SEARCH AND RESCUE (ITEM 6) ARE OF CONCERN TO COSTA RICANS. COSTA RICAN MIND-SETS ARE CONDITIONED BY THE NATION'S ANTI-MILITARY TRADITION AND LACK OF A CONVENTIONAL MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT OR ELITE, AND BY COMMITMENT TO THE NON-INTERVENTION PRINCIPLE. MOST COSTA RICANS ARE THEREFORE INCLINED TO LOOK UNFAVORABLY IN PRINCIPLE UPON (A) US MILITARY COMMAND BEING LOCATED IN A LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRY TO PROVIDE US MILITARY ASSISTANCE AND EQUIPMENT TO MILITARY INSTITUTIONS, (B) JOINT AND COMBINED EXERCISES AND VISITS, OR (C) LINKS WITH AND AMONG LATIN AMERICAN MILITARY FIGURES. NONE OF THESE THINGS ENTICE THEM AND THEY ARE GENERALLY SUSPICIOUS AND LEARY OF TRANSNATIONAL MILITARY LINKS. THEREFORE ANY SHIFT OF SUCH FUNCTIONS OUT OF LATIN AMERICA IS LIKELY TO BE VIEWED AS A PLUS.

3. ON THE OTHER HAND, COSTA RICANS, AND THE GOCR ESPECIALLY, ARE FIRM SUPPORTERS OF THE RIO TREATY AND THE PRINCIPLE OF COLLECTIVE SECURITY, VIEWING THESE AS THEIR PRINCIPAL NATIONAL DEFENSE AND ON THE BASIS OF WHICH THEY ARE PREPARED TO FORGO THE FORMALIZATION OF TRADITIONAL ARMED FORCES IN THE COUNTRY. THE GOCR WOULD BE CONCERNED AT ANY INDICATION THAT THE US HAD LOST INTEREST IN COLLECTIVE SECURITY OR IN MAKING THE RIO TREATY AN EFFECTIVE INSTRUMENT. ONE QUESTION

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TO CONSIDER THEREFORE IS WHETHER THE RELOCATION OF SOUTHCOM WOULD BE PERCEIVED IN THESE TERMS BY COSTA RICANS. WE THINK NOT, LARGELY BECAUSE THE COSTA RICANS HAVE NEVER THOUGHT OF THE RIO TREATY ESSENTIALLY IN TERMS OF SOUTHCOM AND US MILITARY ACTION, BUT RATHER IN TERMS OF THE OAS/PEACE COMMITTEE/ORGAN OF CONSULTATION. SECONDLY, SINCE SOUTHCOM

IS BEING RELOCATED AND NOT ELIMINATED PRESUMABLY US IMPLEMENTING ACTION UNDER THE RIO TREATY THROUGH THE ORGAN OF CONSULTATION WOULD STILL BE AVAILABLE. CONSEQUENTLY, WE DOUBT THAT THE GOCR OR OTHER SECTORS OF SOCIETY WOULD CONSIDER THE RELOCATION AS A LOSS OF PROTECTION.

4. IN THE PAST THE GOCR AND ESPECIALLY SOME OF THE MINISTRIES, SUCH AS PUBLIC SECURITY, HAVE BENEFITTED FROM SERVICES OUT OF THE ZONE, SUCH AS SAR, PROPERTY DISPOSAL, CIVIC ACTION, AND DISASTER RELIEF. THERE MAY THEREFORE BE SOME REGRET AT THE INCONVENIENCE IF SUCH SERVICES ARE MOVED FURTHER AWAY, AND LESS MAY ACTUALLY BE AVAILABLE TO THEM. AGAIN, HOWEVER, THIS IS LIKELY TO BE MITIGATED BY THE FACT THAT PRESUMABLY SERVICES WILL MERELY BE RELOCATED NOT ELIMINATED, AND SOME UNITS SUCH AS SAR MAY STILL BE LOCATABLE IN THE ZONE EVEN IN A CANAL-DEFENSE CONFIGURATION. (THIS IN FACT WOULD SEEM DESIRABLE.)

5. MOST OF COSTA RICAN SOCIETY TENDS RATHER REFLEXIVELY TO VIEW SOUTHCOM'S LOCATION IN PANAMA IN TERMS, FIRST, OF THE CANAL ISSUE AND, SECOND OUT OF MILITARY INTERVENTION. COMMENTS ON THE SECOND POINT ARE CONTAINED IN PARA 2 ABOVE. COSTA RICA IS OVERWHELMINGLY SYMPATHETIC TO PANAMA IN THE CANAL QUESTION, AND THE GOCR AND MOST OF THE PUBLIC WOULD EARNESTLY LIKE TO SEE A NEGOTIATED SOLUTION. THEY CAN UNDER-
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STAND THE CONCEPT OF UNITS TO DEFEND THE CANAL, BUT ARE LIKELY TO BELIEVE THE PANAMANIAN CONTENTION THAT FAR MORE IS LOCATED IN THE ZONE THAN IS REQUIRED STRICTLY FOR DEFENSE. THEREFORE, RELOCATION OF THESE FUNCTIONS AND COMMANDS WOULD ALMOST SURELY BE VIEWED FAVORABLY BY COSTA RICANS AS CONDUCIVE TO A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT, AND OUR IMAGE IMPROVED PSYCHOLOGICALLY IN THESE TERMS.

6. IF RELOCATED, WE AGREE ENTIRELY WITH COMMENTS FROM OTHER POSTS THAT IT SHOULD BE TO CONUS AND NOT TO PUERTO RICO.
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